

STATE PLANNING OFFICE NEWSLETTER

Current News and Updates for Municipal Officials

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Director's Column

By Martha Freeman, Director

Welcome to the first edition of the Maine State Planning Office newsletter. We'll send our newsletter to municipalities and others periodically. Our goal is to provide information that might help you.

We hope you'll want to know more about SPO. New information about Maine's economy, population, environment, and communities appears on our website frequently. Also, please tell us how we can better assist or communicate with you. On our website, www.maine.gov/spo, you'll find contact information for all SPO staff.

We hope you'll visit the Governor's website at www.maine.gov/governor/baldacci for background on the Governor's efforts on economic development, state and local taxes, and more. Growing our economy is the Governor's top priority. I've worked with the Governor, legislators,

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and municipal officials as we try to protect Maine's character while improving our prosperity.

Recently I've had this thought: In parts of the world, the 1.3 million of us who live in Maine would fill up only a city or region, not a whole state. So, we're all neighbors in Maine, part of one hard-working and caring community. Whether you were born here (like me) or moved here—and whatever part of Maine you call home—we're all in this together! State and local governments are facing shared challenges and opportunities. SPO's goal is to help. We hope this newsletter does.

Tracking our property tax reduction goals

By Catherine Reilly, Economic Advisor

LD 1 sets a goal of reducing Maine's national rank for tax burden to the middle one-third of states by 2015. The bill tasks the State Planning Office with tracking Maine's progress toward reaching that goal. The responsibility includes the collection of new data on municipal and county finances.

This is a new and challenging assignment for SPO. We're working to fulfill this obligation as efficiently as possible and are grateful for the

strong support we've received from local officials as we strive to do so.

All data collected through this process will be freely available to municipalities and the MMA. This information could be useful to municipalities as they discuss the impact of LD 1. The revenue and expenditure data could be used to check the accuracy of the local government revenue and expenditure data reported by the US Census Bureau. The Census Bureau reports are sometimes

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Grants help towns develop regional models

By Jody Harris, Director of Program Services

In March 2005, the State awarded \$1 million to municipalities to help them develop regional approaches to delivering local services. The grants are intended to help reduce property taxes and to pilot new approaches which other regions can replicate.

Interest in the program was high as more than 40 regions submitted grant proposals requesting over \$3 million in funding. In the end, the review panel awarded 26 grants comprising 121 municipalities.

Some of the projects funded are innovative. For example, the towns of Gorham and Windham are

\$2 million a year is available for grants to municipalities, counties, and regional governments from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services.

constructing a shared, 3-bay, emergency vehicle maintenance facility in cooperation with the Windham Correctional Center. The three entities will share the costs of the municipal mechanics, which will be supplemented with inmate labor. The program will provide low-cost staffing as well as vocational training for inmates.

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Maine model building code update

For many years, building code officials, builders, and homeowners have wondered why different towns have different building standards. The Legislature considered adopting a statewide code numerous times over the past 15 years, but there was always a struggle over which one. Finally, last summer, P.L. 2004, Ch. 580 took effect that names the 2003 versions of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC), as the "Maine Model Building Code."



The Legislature has enacted a model building code for Maine to make building standards more consistent across the state.

So, for municipalities that want to adopt a building code, there is now a statewide standard.

It is important to note that the Maine Model Building Code includes only building standards. Other standards, such as those for fire safety, electrical, plumbing, elevators, etc., were not enacted as part of Maine's model code. The law provides that if provisions of Maine's model building code conflict with any of these other codes in state law they may not be enforced.

This session, the Legislature is also considering enacting a building rehabilitation code to encourage redevelopment in downtowns. It is expected that the Legislature will direct the State Planning Office to merge all the legislated codes into one; ironing out inconsistencies. This, of course, will be contingent on funding for which SPO hopes to find outside sources.

For answers to frequently-asked questions, please visit our web site at:

<http://www.state.me.us/spo/ceo/training/fag.php>

or contact Lana Clough at 287-8056 or

lane.clough@maine.gov.

Youth migration: myth or reality?

It has become almost an article of faith that there is a massive out-migration of youths leaving Maine in search of opportunities elsewhere. In fact, research by the State Planning Office and the Muskie School of Public Service shows that the major reason for the decline in our state's youth population over the past decade was the result of aging, rather than any exodus.

SPO conducted its research for *Realize!Maine*, the Governor's youth migration conference in May 2004. It found that there are fewer young adults age 20–34 and the proportion of young adults as a percent of Maine's population is declining. Longer life expectancies, aging "baby boomers" (the largest age group in our population), and declining birth rates result in a population where young adults make up a smaller portion today than in the past.

Myth vs. Reality

Did more young people leave Maine than move to Maine? Yes, of young adults aged 20–24, there was a net out-migration during 1990–2000. Of those migrating of between the ages 25–34, however, there was a positive in-migration.

Is there a brain drain? Yes. Both out-migrants and in-migrants are more likely to be college educated, but the proportion of college-educated out-migrants is larger than in-migrants.

Is Northern Maine the principal source of youth leaving the state? No. There are nearly twice as many out-migrants proportionately from the six counties from Kennebec south than from the rest.

Are the young people who move to Maine likely to have come from Maine originally? No. Most of the young people who moved to Maine were not born in Maine.

Are incomes a factor in migration? Not really. The mean income for Maine youth out-migrants living elsewhere is higher than for Maine youth residents, but the difference is not large (\$17,832 compared to \$16,469).

Are in-migrants looking for a place to raise a family? Not necessarily. Young in-migrants are more likely to be single and to live in households without children.

The decline in Maine's youth population is the result of aging, rather than any exodus.

Are youth moving out of state to find jobs they cannot find here? Not really. In-migrants and out-migrants are both employed in technical and scientific professions and other related industries.

Does Maine have more out-migration than other states? No, while there is a net loss of young adults, it is small compared to most states.

All of this does not mean that Maine should not be concerned. A growing population of young and well-educated individuals fuels the economy. With an aging population and workforce, we need to attract and retain young adults. Efforts such as the *Creative Economy* and *Realize!Maine* hope to harness the talents of our young people and increase opportunities for them in Maine as well as to attract to Maine the additional young and skilled workers we will need in the future.

Visit our web for the two reports on this research: <http://www.state.me.us/spo/economics/economics/pubsreports.php>. All research is based on 2000 census data.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FUNDING AVAILABLE

SPO's Waste Management and Recycling Program is accepting applications for grants to support the collection and management of household hazardous waste. Any public entity can apply for these funds at any time for up to 50% reimbursement of the costs of collecting household hazardous waste. If your community has had or is planning a HHW collection this year, visit our web site at www.maine.gov/spo/recycle or contact Sam Morris at 287-8054 or sam.morris@maine.gov.

WATER ACCESS FUNDING STILL AVAILABLE

The Legislature created the *Public Access to Maine Waters* fund in 1993 using 10% of Land for Maine's Future bond funds. The funds can be used to provide boat ramps and launches and points for foot access for fishing, clamming, worming, or sightseeing for both coastal and inland waters. Applications for water access sites may be submitted at any time. There is an expedited review process. But, funding must be directed toward certain priority water bodies. Applicants should consult with SPO staff to determine if the potential water access site meets criteria. For more information, visit the LMF web site at www.maine.gov/spo/lmf or contact Steve Brooke at 287-6736 or steve.brooke@maine.gov.

COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANTS AWARDED

In April, SPO awarded grants to 13 communities to help them develop, update, or implement their local comprehensive land use plans.

- *New Comprehensive Plans:* Allagash, Cushing, Jonesboro, Kingfield, Lee, Willimantic
- *Implementation Plans:* Ellsworth
- *Comprehensive Plan Updates:* Augusta, Corinna, Holden, Monmouth, Standish, Trenton

The State Planning Office awards 10-15 grants annually in a competitive process. For more information, contact Matt Nazar at 287-4818 or matthew.nazar@maine.gov or visit our web site at www.state.me.us/spo/landuse/finassist/.



Effective January 2005, mercury was banned from landfills in Maine. In 2006, electronic wastes like TVs will be banned.

RIGHT-OF-WAY DISCOVERY GRANTS

The Maine Coastal Program helps communities keep track of existing coastal public access. Small grants of approximately \$1,000 can help municipalities or local land trusts research forgotten or overlooked rights-of-way to the shore. Grants are intended to help communities find and assert public rights-of-way, which may be lost by the passing of generations and changing land ownership. For more information, visit the coastal program's web site at:

http://www.state.me.us/spo/mcp/projects/getting_to_shore.php or contact Jim Connors at 287-8938 or jim.connors@maine.gov.

THE STATE'S FLOOD MAPS TO BE MODERNIZED

There is good news for towns that have struggled with outdated or inaccurate floodplain maps. With federal funding, the State Planning Office now has a map modernization coordinator who is working hard to get the state's flood maps updated.

The mapping will be done by county and the first maps to be tackled are in Cumberland, Oxford, and York counties. The federal program is planned for five years and is intended, with local input, to improve flood maps and information statewide.

For more information, visit our web site at www.maine.gov/spo/flood/map or contact Bonnie Cowle at 287-8052 or bonnie.cowle@maine.gov.

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thought to overestimate local tax burden.

In order to collect municipal data, we attached two pages to this year's Municipal Valuation Return (MVR) distributed by Maine Revenue Services. Our goal is to simplify this reporting process as much as possible.

Completing these pages is not mandatory and we made them visually distinct from the required pages of the MVR. However, a high voluntary response rate will allow SPO to report a more complete statewide picture of the impact of LD 1. The information collected by SPO will ultimately be used in a report to the Legislature in January 2006.

We welcome questions, comments, or suggestions from municipalities about this format of

information collection. Please feel free to contact Catherine Reilly at 287-5649 or catherine.reilly@maine.gov. You may also visit SPO's web site for answers to frequently-asked questions: <http://www.state.me.us/spo/sp/municipalval/index.php>

Thank you for your assistance as we work to fulfill our new obligations. We hope that the compiled data will be useful to your municipality.



Catherine Reilly, an economic advisor with the State Planning Office, is from Hancock County. She has a B.A. in economics from Loyola in Maryland and M.A. in economics from Fordham University. Kate helped research the impacts of the Palesky tax cap referendum for the Margaret Chase Smith Center in Orono prior to joining SPO.

Maine State Citizen Corps gets off the ground

By Kim Goding, Maine Commission for Community Service

When an emergency happens, the first people at a scene are usually family, neighbors, or members of the public who are passing by. Yet, we are poorly trained. Only 30% of us know CPR, only 6% have fire extinguishers, and only 15% know how to suppress a fire, according to a University of Southern Maine survey of Maine households. This is one reason for Maine Citizen Corps.

Part of the federal department of Homeland Security, Citizen Corps aims to engage citizens in hometown security through training, personal preparedness, and volunteer service.

The mission of Citizen Corps is to establish partnerships between citizen volunteers and first responders, law enforcement, health officials, emergency management, community leaders, and volunteer organizations. In the past two years, the Corps has helped launch 33 *Volunteers in Police Service* programs in Maine attached to local police departments. In 2005, a *Fire Corps* program is slated for implementation that will help build capacity of local fire departments.

To learn more about the Citizen Corps Council in your area, contact Maryalice Crofton at 287-8931 or maryalice.crofton@maine.gov.

*Only 28% of
Mainers feel they
are prepared to
respond to a
natural disaster.*

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Waterville and Winslow will consolidate their respective fire and police services into a single, joint, public safety service.

Mapleton, Castle Hill, and Chapman will look at implementing a joint municipal accounting and finance program.

A group of five towns in Androscoggin County plans to develop a municipal services group that would share staff among towns for code enforcement, assessing, planning, engineering, and purchasing.

All of these projects will serve as models that could be replicated in other regions.

As part of the citizen-initiated School Finance Act of 2003, Maine voters approved funding for an annual \$2 million to continue the grant program. Another grant cycle is expected to be announced in the fall 2005 with the second round of awards made in March 2006. For more information, contact Jody Harris at 287-5424 or jody.harris@maine.gov.

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